1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

tinual dereliction of some duty although outright malfeasance such as stealing can also bring swift and awesome retribution. For example, a young boy was beaten for continually omitting to gather grass for his father's horse. This is a skill that a boy should acquire by the age of six or eight, possibly nine at the very latest. When punishment occurs its severity is noted by all children within earshot, and thus the beating of one child of the village or ward serves notice on all that punishment is not just a matter of threats but may become a reality if limits are transgressed.

That such household learning soon becomes habitual can be seen any day in a Bornu village by watching children. Even a little girl of three and a half can accomplish tasks involving quite a lot of dexterity. One little girl of this age was passed a straw mat plate and separately given some paper clips. She neatly put the paper clips on the plate and began her own already advanced imitation of the quick, deft, jiggling movements associated with the sifting of ground-nut shells. None of her paper clips was dropped, and she soon passed the plate back saying, "Here are some sifted ground nuts."

Sometimes play takes in both sexes and is more complex than simple imitation like the one above. Thus for several days a large group of young children from the age of five through ten may organize a "wedding." The "bride" and "groom" are chosen as are the various kindred, the best man, the leading woman, etc. Care is taken to practice as many of the details of the adult virgin wedding ceremony as they can manage including even a mock impregnation, in this case with a small doll. Wedding foods in miniature are passed around to the adults who accept the mock food with a show of seriousness although they may comment on or question some detail of the ceremony carried out mistakenly or omitted by the children. Adults expressed satisfaction with this type of play and remarked on its instructive value for the children. Such play is related to an even more complex form called *mai-mai*, which is no longer practiced in Bornu. In playing *mai-mai* the young children in a village put on a pageant. They chose a king, nobles, servants, slaves, wives, gave titles to everyone, and behaved for several days in the guise of these socio-political roles. Mock battles were fought, slaves taken and justice meted out in a mock court. Seniority was established by age and consent. The organization was temporary like the "wedding" and disbanded after a few days. During periods when adults are out of the compound, away at a market, or working in the fields during the growing season, children often play house. The group gets together and appoints "fathers," "wives," and "children." The little children may actually cook for their "husbands" on such occasions and the couples go into a hut in the compound where sexual play is carried on. They are, however, soon called back to the larger group where it has been declared "morning" by another child who has announced the "morning prayers" signifying that night has passed. Boys are aware that such play should stop when they can ejaculate. From then on they are men; sex is a serious affair and unmarried girls are illegitimate objects of sexual intercourse. However such prepubescent sex derived from playing "house" is widespread, or to paraphrase one young informant, "Everyone does such things when they are young."

Boys especially, but girls as well, may also begin some religious instruction during their childhood. Although girls never leave home for this purpose, boys sometimes do after the age of six or seven. In some cases the teacher lives nearby

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and the boys go there to learn their prayers and the beginning of Islamic theology. In some cases, especially with girls, the instruction is taken in the household itself. During adolescence this training may become more serious, and boys who were not sent to live with their religious teachers before may go off to learn Islamic practices in greater detail. The relationship of a boy to his *mallam* or religious teacher is expressed in the saying, "Your mallam exceeds your father." In other words, a boy's religious instructor exceeds his father in fatherly qualities and he must be respected and obeyed as a superior whose authority is unquestioned.

Whether a child goes to live with his religious teacher or not, there are other important factors that maintain for him a high turn-over among household members that is in striking contrast to the norms of western society. No matter where he lives in Bornu there is a high divorce rate and the possibility that his mother and father will not live together all their lives is very great indeed. Children stay under the control of their father in his household, although some contact with the mother is maintained and remains a strong emotional bond for many, even though there is a constant possibility that it cannot remain a household relationship. High divorce also means that the mother's co-wives are continually changing and that one's own half-siblings may be without their own mother in the compound so that compound relationships themselves are continually shifting and changing throughout a person's childhood.

The Kanuri also practice fostering. In some cases children are given to grandparents, or friends, or other relatives to be raised. Sometimes the reasons are political, and the parents try to place the child in a very important person's household so that the child may grow up knowing and associating with people who can help him later on in life. Sometimes it is felt to be a kindness towards a friend or to the child's grandparents. Whatever the reason, the child lives during his early years in a compound other than that of his own parents. It is possible to find Kanuri who have lived in as many as four or five compounds by the time they reach adolescence, and two or three is quite common. On the other hand, there are also many people—especially in rural areas where their work is needed—who were raised in only one household. One informant reported how he was given to a father's younger brother at weaning, given to a religious teacher at six, returned to his father at the age of eight, then put into the household of the district head when he was thirteen. Although there is much variation in this practice, in conjunction with the high divorce rate as well as the always present possibility of sudden death by disease, it means again that the actual people in the younger person's relational network are many, many, times more fluid and changing than is the case in western society.

Summing up this very important point, we may say that it is a rare Kanuri who has passed through childhood with a stable set of interpersonal relations to siblings or adult members of his household. This means that in child training the relationships to specific persons are not stressed as much as the norms of behavior we spoke of in Chapter 3. The one important exception to this is the relationship to one's mother which is particularly strong between a mother and her son. This fits nicely into the life cycle of women who, as we shall see, usually return to their son later in their old age to take up the role of old, unmarried women. In stressing the norms of behavior rather than particular relationships, it is respect and obedience